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## ORGANIZED LEISURE AS A FACTOR IN CONSERVATION

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The last two decades in the life of the American democracy have been subject to the challenge which comes from a highly organized system of production, an intensification of the economic struggle for the division of the spoils of overproduction, and the middle-class aspirations of the working people. The struggle for democracy as a philosophic concept of our social order has been confused and overwhelmed by a struggle for economic acquisitiveness and independence.

The war has suddenly challenged the democracy of wealth, and it has become the supreme task of the United States to take up this challenge for the whole world. The masses are demanding a new and clearer definition of the basic principles of the democratic state that would be worthy of the sacrifices we are called upon to make in this great war, and we are learning day by day that the strength of a national democracy rests in its internationalism.

We have been hurled into a period of hasty and intensive mobilization and are utilizing the achievement of our inventive genius for the development of efficient brute force. All our energy, all our patriotism, all our intelligence, are bent on fighting the enemy from without. The most radical forms of government action, socialistic principles in matters of public ownership of utilities and resources, are the order of the day, but they are all the result of emergent conditions which must be met even though the present order of things is for the moment sacrificed to or regenerated through the task of winning the war. Almost every aspect of our economic and social life bears a decorum of democracy which was at first put on for the occasion, but is fast becoming a reality of our national life. The church, the school, the public platform, the newspapers, are vieing with each other in propaganda intended to

inspire confidence in this democracy and a lasting hatred of the Hun, who is described as anti-Christ, anti-democracy, and anti-civilization. We hear, however, little about what democracy really is and still less about the way we are to perpetuate, intensify, and purify democracy at home.

For the first time in the history of a people a great international cataclysm has created the moment for the perfecting of national unity on the basis of an ideal of state rather than of social superiorities or inferiorities attendant upon the race struggle. Fidelity to dynasty and race are measured in the balance with the social destiny of mankind, and the destiny of nations and national resources are for the first time facing the future with some hope of relieving the energies heretofore used in obtaining security from without toward increasing worth from within.

This country is already, at least in part, emancipated from the race struggle which has set Europe aflame. Internationalism was thrust upon this country by the very nature of its social and political organization and its populational make-up. Our present task must be to crystallize a political ideal worthy and capable of being upheld by people of all races and creeds.

The next quarter of a century in the history of the United States will be a period of readjustment and reconstruction. The glories of the war which we are bound to win threaten to become a great menace, as they may become the torchbearers of the greatest social and political advance in the history of the world.

The leaders, upon whom rests the main burden of defending democracy abroad and maintaining our sense of democracy at home, will be called upon to determine the new state. We must guard against that rigidity of mind that comes from overabundance of pride and achievement. We must prepare the masses for the leadership that the present crisis will produce, and prepare the leadership itself. Let us avoid confusing war efficiency with political efficiency and military generalship with democratic leadership.<sup>1</sup>

I have been asked to talk about community organization for conservation and other purposes. May I venture the suggestion

<sup>1</sup> The post-bellum days of the Civil War should be a warning against such confusion.

that we are already organized, perhaps overorganized, for conservation in its narrowest conception? We are conserving food, metals, building materials, labor; in a word, everything that may be of use in winning the war. What we are not conserving are the economic and social resources which exist in our midst and which in our ante-bellum days would have been no less valuable in preparing for the war than they are likely to be in the post-bellum days, in making the achievements of the war permanent and efficient in the perpetuation of democracy.

All great social movements and philosophies of state must be translated into emotionalism if they are to survive, but they must first bear the test of science and justice and good sense. Let us not emotionalize democracy before we have given it the full measure of the test of science and justice and good sense which comes from a common understanding of the people affected, and let it be a real democracy.

Idealistic movements fail, not because of their scientific unsoundness, but because of popular ignorance. My plea, therefore, is for broad practical education of the masses in matters of democracy, a task, to be sure, of almost unsurmountable difficulty, but one that can be achieved by community organization for democratic thinking and democratic action. The problem at present is not one of securing knowledge, but one of permitting knowledge to flow untainted by what is false or misleading in our social life. Thomas Hobbes realized the dangers of pollution which threaten science not only in the popular field, but even in university circles, and expressed himself as follows: "Seeing that the universities are the foundation of civil and moral doctrine, from which the preachers and the gentry, drawing such water as they find, use to sprinkle the same upon the people, there ought certainly to be great care taken to have it pure."

An active, intelligent, progressive democratic state depends for its existence upon the leisure of its people. In other words, civilization begins where leisure as a common privilege begins. Democracy ends where leisure as a class privilege begins. I believe with Edward Carpenter that "the faster the wheels of production are turning the faster they throw off a parasitic leisure class on the

one hand and an unemployed, leisure labor class on the other."<sup>1</sup> Production cannot achieve the high degree of efficiency that modern inventions are capable of without an intelligent and equitable distribution of leisure that is intended to conserve and create.

In the discussion of the general subject of conservation and leisure we have perhaps ventured a little too far afield, but the mental processes through which we often reach a practical issue may help not only to clarify the vision itself, but to give the issue its proper place and perspective in the general scheme of our activities, whether they be individual or social.

Leisure has from the very beginning of civilization played the most important part in all social achievement.<sup>2</sup> We have no time here to go into the history of leisure as an individual asset, as a class privilege, or as a social force. Suffice it to say that with the development of industrialism, with the destruction of the aesthetic creative element in individual production as exemplified by the early crafts, and with the introduction of the factory system, fatigue gave the first impetus for the demand of leisure as a common privilege. At first leisure threatened efficiency, and the leisure classes came slowly to realize that unorganized, unled, and uncontrolled leisure threatened rather than helped efficiency. The recreation movement was in the nature of a process of sublimation—as the psychoanalysts would call it—rather than a process of making leisure an asset to democracy or a means of intellectual and social self-expression. It was only after the so-called reformers and the men with vision, like Ruskin and Toynbee, took up the movement for conserving leisure that it became a powerful factor in our social thinking and in the leveling downward of the achievements of modern civilization.

The history of organized leisure in this country is associated with a few people and a few movements, such as the playground, the social settlement, the community theater, and the community center. The last, however, is merely the synthesis of the movements which have preceded it and which under its present impetus

<sup>1</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*.

<sup>2</sup> Odin has shown and Ward has reinforced the scientific truth of this principle.

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should become a democratic social institution instead of a quasi-social movement with a philanthropic background.

I have stated in outline the significance of leisure and its possibilities as an asset to democratic thinking and action. I shall now attempt to outline the main functions of leisure. It has been pointed out that modern production is intimately and inseparably related to the problem of avoiding fatigue and the providing of recuperative facilities where fatigue cannot be avoided. The increase in leisure should therefore be regarded as the first prerequisite of human conservation both socially and industrially. It has long been recognized, as Hobhouse says, that "people are not fully free in their political and social capacity when they are subject to industrial conditions which devitalize them to the extent of depriving them of their power to exercise these capabilities." That industrial productivity is also reduced when industry is devitalizing and fatiguing hardly needs emphasis.

I shall not limit my discussion to the utilization of leisure as a means of recuperation of one's productive power, but shall venture a bolder classification of the aspects of leisure even at the risk of appearing technical or visionary. The classification I venture to propose is as follows:

- I. Recuperation
- II. Recreation
- III. Conservation
- IV. Sublimation
- V. Education and culture
- VI. Aesthetic and emotional leisure
- VII. Social synergy (Ward)

I shall now take up each of the aspects of leisure in turn and discuss them briefly in relation to democracy, industry, and conservation.

### **I. RECUPERATION**

This is perhaps the most essential element in production. Its value to the community and to the individual is static, and although not anti-social, it is non-social. It relates the individual to his industrial task without regard to the fitness of the individual for

the task to be performed. We might justly say that it is essentially a biological function of leisure. That the communities are slowly coming to a realization of the importance of organizing leisure for recuperative purposes is shown by our housing-reform movements, our free baths, our open spaces, agitations against unnecessary noises, summer outings and vacations, etc. The war will teach us many a lesson relative to the avoidance and control of fatigue as well as the best methods of recuperation, many of which we shall find applicable to industrial life.

Recognizing that fatigue tends to decrease the power to work, to reduce or destroy the pleasure taken in work, and to interfere with the social potentialities during the hours spent away from work, the avoidance of fatigue by readjustment of industrial processes and the lengthening of leisure hours becomes a social rather than an economic problem. The efficiency expert has done much toward reducing fatigue in the interest of production. Organized leisure should capitalize this reduction in fatigue in the interest of socialization.

## II. RECREATION

Objections may be raised to a division of leisure that would separate recuperation from recreation. Confusion and overlapping of service in recreational activities are responsible for the failure to differentiate between the two aspects or functions of leisure. It is clear, however, that while recuperation is a biological process involving mainly a passive condition, recreation is an active mental and physical process intended to call into play brain centers and physical organs not involved in the daily industrial tasks of the subject.

In providing recreational facilities as defined for the purpose of this paper, the playground, the settlement, the community center, the dance hall, as non-commercial agencies, the moving-picture, the saloon, the poolroom, the public dance hall, etc., have furnished ample, although not necessarily adequate, facilities.

In what relation the present recreational facilities stand to both the needs and the demands of the people as required by their physical and mental activities as wage-earners is yet to be ascertained. The normal activities of industry should be supplemented by providing recreational facilities which would balance the physical

and mental activities of the individual in a manner that would afford the maximum opportunities for recuperation of the organs and centers utilized in industrial life and the highest development of organs and centers that remain fallow during industrial production. The testing out of our recreational methods in relation to industry is still in the realm of speculation and has not reached the experimental state. The cantonments and the speeded-up war industries should afford a most unusual opportunity for both the psychologist and the sociologist, as these will prove of momentous importance in the production of war materials and during the reconstruction period which must follow this war.

### III. CONSERVATION

We have had much discussion of the problem of human conservation, and the achievement in this direction is not to be discounted. The point of view, however, of those engaged in the task of conserving our human resources has been static rather than dynamic. We have failed to realize that the coefficient of production and efficiency in a task performed need not necessarily be the coefficient of individual efficiency in the performance of a task which the individual is most capable of performing. The conservation of human resources has been centered upon the productive agents in their relation to a given task already being performed without seeking to ascertain the potential capabilities of the individual in new tasks.

The providing of facilities for discovering and capitalizing the aptitude of individuals which would afford opportunities for finding the most productive and individually the most suitable type of employment has been neglected. Through intimate contact with individual aptitudes and a knowledge of the individual problems of workers a few instances of conservation of a positive character can be called to mind by almost any experienced social worker. That careful organization for the conservation of individual potentialities coupled with a system of vocational analysis and guidance can be secured through proper utilization of leisure and adequate facilities for the use of such leisure is clear. Whether the playground, the community center, or some new agency should be intrusted with



this task it is not my intention to forecast. There is, however, a field of service here which claims attention, a field that is both industrially and socially in the nature of conservation. As soon as we give it recognition we shall have no difficulty in devising the machinery for its accomplishment.

Two or three years ago Mr. John Collier and some of his associates in community-center work conceived the idea that health work should be made part of the activities of the community center. A successful clinical experiment along this line was carried out on a co-operative basis, but the objections raised by the medical profession against interference with present individualistic methods of practicing medicine threaten to delay the further development of this movement. That the development of adequate leisure-time activities and the proper placing of labor in industries are matters that require medical as well as social analysis cannot be denied. Whether leisure-time agencies should be concerned at this moment with the adequate and democratic distribution of medical care and prophylaxis is still open to some discussion. That the problem of health is a problem of conservation we all agree. Whether we are still willing to trust to the charitable clinic and the individualistic methods of medical practice to meet the problem must soon be decided. If Havelock Ellis reads the signs of the times correctly, the nationalization of medicine is in process of becoming an accomplished fact. Are we justified in trying to accelerate it? Whatever our opinion regarding the administration of medical service, health is essentially a leisure-time problem.

Industry is essentially individualistic and competitive; leisure is essentially social and co-operative. The fostering of the co-operative spirit which is necessary in all effective social organization has frequently found its best medium in the economic co-operative movements of both producers and consumers. This movement has passed the experimental stage and is assuming proportions which are sufficiently impressive to become part of the general activities of the agencies dealing with the organization of leisure time. That a considerable part of the economic problem of the wage-earners can be attributed to bad financial management and inefficient selection of commodities, both as to price and utility, is well known

to every social worker. In what way the consumers' co-operative movement may be made to serve as an educational factor in the more intelligent selection of commodities has been amply demonstrated. The leisure-time agencies may be used as a medium for furthering this movement, as a means both of increasing the purchasing power of wages and of intensifying the co-operative instincts of the people. As Béatrice Potter says:

Exactly, the same qualities of public-spirited energy, capacity for compromise, dogged persistence and self-subordination, together with shrewd intelligence in choice of officials, watchfulness and generosity towards servants—precisely the same intellectual and moral gifts are needed in the members of the successful store as in the citizens of a well ordered and enterprising municipality.

That co-operation for the mere increase of the purchasing power of wages is conservational in the highest degree has been proved in England, France, Germany, Holland, and Denmark, and more recently in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. SUBLIMATION

Psychoanalysis is a comparatively new science, but psychoanalytic methods have been in use in organized leisure-time service ever since its inception. Sublimation, or the substitution of one activity for another to satisfy certain fundamental instincts, was in truth the dynamic force which produced the recreational movement in this country. From the opening up of Mulberry Bend in New York to the most recent and up-to-date community center recreation has been directed largely toward the substitutions of the commercialized, undesirable leisure-time activities by higher types of activities, whether these be in the nature of physical exercises or of intellectual and emotional expression.

To what extent the studies of criminality, vice, and other degenerative and anti-social leisure-time activities have found substitutes in the new movement for the organization of leisure would be difficult to state. There is, however, a new field of scientific inquiry which the psychoanalyst may undertake with a view to developing new and less ill-adjusted leisure-time activities

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *Co-operation the Hope of the Consumer*.

*en masse* that would open the way toward more adequate service in the prevention of vice and crime than we have been able to render with our present cruder knowledge and less scientific methods. That the development of psychoanalysis as an auxiliary science of leisure-time activities would be an element of conservation of no mean importance is apparent, but whether the effort required to bring this about should be made at this time must be determined by those closely associated with the recreational movement, and by the scientists who know what is available by way of scientific data bearing on this subject and what is yet to be learned and made applicable to the practical problems of leisure time.

#### V. EDUCATION AND CULTURE

*Education.*—The German philosopher Mock said that *the human brain is an organ of adaptation and not cogitation*. While we may be averse to recognizing the truth of such a thought, our political life, the attitude of the ruling classes, and the scantiness of general educational facilities for the adult classes would seem to justify Mock's contention. That our ordinary industrial life often renders clear thinking and accurate knowledge impossible of attainment we are all aware. *But even if we recognize Hobbe's dictum as to the inertia of the human mind, we must not forget the other dictum by the same thinker, namely, that the monopoly of ideas in one group is detrimental to the other.*

That the human mind is often inert must be admitted, but inactive minds are more likely to intensify than to reduce this inertia. Lack of continued education makes for a rigidity of mind that is akin to the physical rigidity attendant upon sedentary occupations and senility. *Society is ruled by certain fundamental ideas most in harmony with the interests of the ruling classes. If democracy is to be a reality, if the people are to determine their own social and political destiny, they should be the masters of these fundamental ideas, or "force thoughts," as Fouillée calls them.* That it is utopian to think of all the people as of sufficient intelligence and education to be intrusted with the destiny of the state is conceded, but progress toward such a democracy is only hampered by failure to recognize at least the remote possibility of such a state of affairs.

The obvious reason why continuous education of the masses is needed may be stated briefly as follows:

1. *To maintain a normal store of information necessary in the constant adjustment to daily life and problems.*—The complexities of intensive social life require constant adjustments and readjustments to the demands of one's own physical existence, protection against dangerous environmental conditions, changes in standards of living, new means of conservations of life and energy, etc. These alone are sufficient for the building up of a popular educational system for which community organization of the most effective and far-reaching type is needed. The dissemination of knowledge concerning the mean daily problems in the life of the people is an undertaking worthy of the best of our educators. That the present rate of progress is too rapid to depend upon the primary and secondary schools for its effective spread among the people must be conceded. The leveling downward of the daily achievements in the direction of improved living is a leisure-time problem of educational character affecting the adult population. The settlements, the community center, the school center, the popular lecture, the daily press, are adequate agencies for this work. The shaping of their policies as a means of developing methods for the teaching of efficient living in harmony with our daily progress is still in process of development and adjustment.

2. *To correct erroneous ideas acquired in so-called official education.*—The problems of correcting educational errors, as many of us have often found, is perhaps more difficult than the acquisition of new knowledge. The retentive powers of the human mind in matters of principles of life and conduct are greater than the assimilative powers that must be brought into play in the dissemination of new ideas.

3. *The sifting of ideas necessary in the protection of the masses against class education and class control.*—Those who can look back upon the political careers of many of our cities, say New York or Philadelphia, particularly the last elections in these two cities, will realize that discrimination in matters of political ideas and ideals is not to be expected of the public. The average voter is devoid of idealism and is incapable of discrimination between a practical

governmental concept and manifestations, either social or economic. *Organized leisure for the development of the powers of discrimination and selections of ideas and principles to be applied to our political and social life may well begin in the field of politics by the abolition of class reform in favor of popular and continuous political education in the masses.*

4. *Adjustment to changes in the political and social order.*—Much social legislation has been secured by reformers in the last two decades. The records of our legislative sessions sound like utopian dreams inflicted upon a wholly practical and unworthy human race. Many of our social reformers are at-work today upon legislative schemes intended to make this country a better and safer place to live in. Should we dare stop, however, to measure the practical achievements that have resulted from this mass of humanitarian legislation we would find ourselves face to face with the problem of popularizing popular legislation. *The difficulty has been that most of the demands for social legislation have come from the expert, and the masses have been neglected as a factor in securing the legislation in which they should have been first to give expression to their needs and the first to benefit by them. The whole principle of popular government has been endangered, and social work has assumed the prerogative of a popular movement.*

Were the masses organized for a better understanding of their own needs and a more active co-operation in the securing of legislation and other facilities for meeting these needs, social reform would become an active, continuous, vitalized, practical, and popular manifestation of the life of the people. We have been legislating downward. Only through proper education in matters of social reform shall we reach a point where legislation shall emanate from the people and shall become part of the life of the people.

5. *The progress of science and the progress of society.*—Social workers are often impatient of their directing boards because of the apparent and sometimes actual shortsightedness in matters of social service. Antiquated and anti-social methods frequently prevail in the field of social work, where social science has reached a stage of positive knowledge which shows the futility and wastefulness of the methods in vogue. What is true of social service is

true of other fields of human endeavor, especially where the element of competition is eliminated or minimized. In the fields of medicine, law, engineering, sanitation, etc., the public seldom receives the full measure of service and protection produced by the development of the arts and sciences back of the above-named professions. There seems to be a wide gap between scientific achievement and the practical application of this achievement for common service. This is due to the lack of sufficient education of the masses to make them aware of these achievements and to assist in socializing them. That the failure of popular education in this direction is retarding social progress is plainly to be seen. The problem of popular education, therefore, is the development of machinery for the spread of the most advanced practical knowledge untainted by class or partisan interests and in harmony with the most pressing needs for the individual and social development of the people.

*Culture.*—We have heard so much about German *Kultur* within the last four years that one is fearful of using the word culture lest it be confused with *Kultur*. To avoid confusion I venture, therefore, to draw the distinction between "*Kultur*" as meaning social achievement in science, art, and industry, and culture, which is moral and spiritual development of the people in the attainment of which achievements in the arts, sciences, and industry are an essential part. The elements of culture are to be found in leisure, and until recently the leisure class alone claimed the privilege of culture. However that may be, modern education among the masses must guard against developing an educational system that would be akin to that soulless product of the German social order known as *Kultur*. Without the spiritual side science and art and even literature are devoid of that joy of mental power that makes educational acquisitiveness an end instead of a means to an end.

Darwin realized the danger of mental acquisitiveness and one-sided development when he complained that his mind had become a machine for extracting general laws, but that his faculties had been atrophied, which meant a loss of joy. How difficult it would be to give cultural value to our educational system and in particular to popular education can readily be seen. What is not so clear is

what methods and what kinds of popular education should be developed in order to give the masses a true perception of the spiritual value of education. True culture can be attained by the development of an educational system which tends to develop personality and to harmonize personal efforts with the needs and aspirations of all the people. Only when education ceases to be a class privilege and is established as a free, permanent, continuous, common right of all the people shall we be able to attain that higher sphere of social relationship that comes from the spiritualizing of knowledge or folk-culture.

#### VII. AESTHETIC AND EMOTIONAL LEISURE

One of the most inspiring aspects of anti-German feeling in this war is the great cry that has been raised against the destruction of works of art such as the Louvain and Rheims cathedrals and the beautiful public buildings in the Belgian cities. It seems almost as if the destruction of the treasures of human achievements in the field of art had been more mercilessly condemned as barbarous than the rape of Belgium as a state and the destruction of millions of human lives.

The aesthetic development of a people is crystallized in its arts. That the character and development of art forms are dependent not alone upon the innate power of achievement of the talent and genius in our midst, but upon the concept of art prevalent among the people, is conceded by everyone. Art cannot reach its highest forms unless it has the backing and understanding of a high aesthetic development of the people. The arts of Greece and Rome were the creation, not alone of Greek and Roman artists, but of an art-patron class which gave art its social and economic support.

In a democracy art can be removed from the sphere of class privileges and made a part of the life of the people. The forms that democratic art is to take will depend upon the freedom with which we afford opportunities for artistic creation and art enjoyment for all the people. I was told by an artist that the Aquarium in New York is attended yearly by three times as many people as the Metropolitan Museum of that city. One is prompted to ask whether our educational system, our press, our government agencies,

and the art groups themselves have not been so contemptuous of popular art education as to defeat the end of art in this country. One needs only to glance at our public monuments, public buildings, and our almost barbarous neglect of natural resources for creative landscape art to realize that so far democracy has not included among its achievements a democratic art. We need to popularize the wealth of art treasures at least in the degree in which the "fish circus" of New York is popularized, and this can be done only by community organization intended to meet this need. We shall never have a strong democratic art without first making art popular with democracy.

But aside from the popular passive enjoyment of art we must endeavor to develop the creative faculties of our people through the dance, the pageant, the festival, the mask, the choral society, the amateur theater, etc. A few leaders in this field have already laid the foundation of a great folk-art movement. The foreign elements in this country are freely offering their contribution toward this folk art, and the traditions of the United States afford no mean resources for the renascence of neglected art forms created by the people as an expression of their creative powers. We need only organize to develop these heterogeneous masses of folk arts into a synthetic whole of American folk art which will bear the marks of a united people born of an international melting-pot.

The church is another element in the emotional sphere of leisure that needs not so much the force of organization as correlation with the needs of the community and its people. It is rather disheartening to watch the division of labor between organized politics and the organized church. One seems to arrogate to itself the guardianship of vice and degradation, the other the guardianship of virtue and spirituality. Between the two we find the vast majority of the people contentiously indifferent toward both. The church seems to have become divided on issues of creed, but has not become integrated and organized as the most potent and theoretically the most spiritual factor in the socialization of the world. That this point of view is now permeating the churches is evident from the many interchurch movements started in recent years, but that much of the activities of these movements has been



directed toward specific, flagrant evils in conflict with personal morality rather than social justice we are all aware. The task of socializing the church needs only the leadership that intensive community organization will produce. This will never be attained as long as the interests of the churches are not identified with the needs of the people as a whole, as long as the contact of the people with the church is confined to the safeguarding of the principles of intimate personal morality rather than the emotionalizing of broad social ideals in harmony with the potential social achievement of the present day.

#### VII. SOCIAL SYNERGY

There is in every department of nature, including the social order, a law which *conserves, creates, and constructs*. The rate of social conservation, creation, and construction depends upon the use of the social achievement of the past in its relation to the conditions which developed in favor of these three elements of the law of synergy, as Professor Ward calls it.

The organization of leisure, the conditions which are developed, consciously or unconsciously, in the social order for the most intensive development of social synergy, in the sense of conserving achievements already attained, creating new forms of achievement, and utilizing these achievements in the improvement of the present social order will control the rate of democratization of the people. The social reconstruction of America must depend upon the creative and constructive social faculties of the people. Leisure and its use in social synergy will determine the rate of democratic progress that we shall attain.

Trench warfare is breaking up class lines, it is bringing new inspiration to the struggle for ideals of freedom and equality, it is creating a new religion of social justice. The peaceful communities at home should join in the struggle and organize to prepare a social state for which the man in the trenches shall never be ashamed to have fought. By the way we use our leisure will the destiny of democracy be determined.